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General Comments on HB 6659: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on the Governor's proposed budget for childcare and public education.

My name is Margaret Henderson and I live in Danbury, where we have the lowest per pupil funding in the state. I am writing about HB 6659, and specifically about funding for K-12 education in Connecticut.

- I'm the President of the Board of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury, which is here to stand up for kids and education. We have 150 members and friends.
- I'm also a member of Recovery For All, a statewide coalition bringing together more than 60 community, faith, and labor organizations across Connecticut.

I worked as a tutor for a private company before the pandemic, but as I learned more about how the schools in our city are struggling, I no longer wanted to benefit by helping privileged children get farther ahead, so I quit. (Financial circumstances have recently forced me to resume tutoring, but under protest.)

In Danbury over the last 4 years I have heard:

- parents desperately plead for smaller classes and more help for their children
- teachers complain they have so many immigrant children who are still learning English that they represent 60 different languages, and wonder how they're supposed to support those students given their current workload
- parents of color describe the struggles of their children to feel safe at school, asking for more counselors and other adults to address serious mental health issues
- students complain that college and career counseling at school is a joke because one counselor is assigned hundreds of students.

Connecticut is short-changing public school children – particularly kids whose parents work low-wage jobs, kids who are Black and Brown, and kids who are learning English as a second language. **The kids who need the most support are getting the lowest funding from elected leaders right now**, because of decades of bad policy decisions. Connecticut is more regressive in this regard than any other state except Nebraska and Texas! [See data](#).

Equity requires funding. Our state faces a multibillion-dollar surplus and an overflowing Rainy Day Fund, while our wealthiest corporations and residents are prospering. They do so at the expense of the children whose futures are being ignored in our preK-12 public schools. We have a historic opportunity *this session*

to make a course correction: **fully fund our public schools to guarantee quality education for ALL students, especially those who are relying on us the most to safeguard their futures.**

I am very concerned about **charter schools**, which are a hot issue in Danbury right now. Charter schools must be transparent and must be held accountable to the public when they get public funds. The money you allocate for our children's education must not end up in the pocket of a CEO somewhere. I urge you to address these questions in the interests of public school students statewide.

A society cannot thrive if it doesn't nurture and educate its children. Our public schools are under-resourced and our teachers are leaving the profession. Please help level the playing field for kids and allocate more funding to the care and education of the children in our state who need it the most. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Henderson